

# The WATCH Chronicle



WATCH is a court monitoring and judicial policy non-profit located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. WATCH works to make the justice system more responsive to crimes of violence against women and children, focusing on greater safety for victims of violence and greater accountability for violent offenders.

February 2018 Volume 4, Issue 1



## Two judges bring expertise, passion for service to DV court

*Shereen Askalani and Mark Kappelhoff are teaming up to co-chair the Domestic Violence Steering Committee.*

By Mark Wollemann

Serving the public has been a career-long passion for the two judges who co-chair the Hennepin County Domestic Violence Steering Committee.

“For me, I’ve devoted my career to public service,” said Judge Shereen Askalani, who along with Judge Mark Kappelhoff, was appointed to the Fourth Judicial District Court by Gov. Mark Dayton in April 2016. They started serving as co-chairs of the Domestic Violence Steering Committee later that year.

Kappelhoff agreed. “Public service has been a driving force in my life,” he said.

During their legal careers, they both worked extensively on crimes involving domestic violence and human trafficking.

Askalani, who grew up in Mankato, spent the bulk of her career as an assistant Ramsey County Attorney, spending 10 years in the adult prosecution division working on criminal sexual conduct, felony domestic assault and homicide cases.

Kappelhoff, a native of Anoka, began his career as a public defender and worked in Washington, D.C., for many years in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, where he created a specialized unit to prosecute human trafficking cases. He returned to Minnesota in 2012 to become part of the faculty at the University of Minnesota Law School.

As new judges in Hennepin County, they collaborate with key players throughout the justice system to ensure that the system is fair and equitable for all of the participants and to also support education, rehabilitation, and



Judge Shereen Askalani grew up in Mankato and has served as co-chair of the Domestic Violence Steering Committee since the fall of 2016.

### Inside:

Sex Trafficking Report	4-5
Volunteers Needed	4
In The News	5-6

(Continued from Page 1)

other programming that may benefit perpetrators and victims involved in misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor domestic violence cases.

One of the goals in Hennepin County's Domestic Violence Court, Askalani said, is to "not see the participants again."

The best way to achieve that aim is to create a culture of consistency in these sometimes difficult and often challenging cases.

"Domestic violence cases are not for everyone," Askalani said. "As a former prosecutor, I know there are times when no one is cooperating; not the victims, not the defendants. As judges, throughout that process, we want to make sure the victim is safe, the public is safe and the defendant receives the right disposition. We want to make sure the defendant is receiving the programming and treatment he or she needs."

Hennepin County established its Domestic Violence Court in late 2000 in hopes of creating a more effective way of prosecuting misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases involving assaults, orders of protection violations, probation revocations and the like.

The Domestic Violence Steering Committee was formed to help monitor the court but also to help coordinate communication and feedback between institutional agencies, such as police, probation, prosecutors and public defenders, and also community advocacy groups and court monitoring organizations such as WATCH.

"Coordination and communication is an important part" of the work of the steering committee, Kappelhoff said. "If we need to make a change (in procedure or process), it's essential that all the voices are at the table and can participate in that process.

"We learn from the group regarding what's working well and how we can improve the justice system. Their voices are heard because we're all at the table together."

WATCH has been a longtime participant on the Domestic Violence Steering Committee and the judges said they prize its presence there.

"One of the challenges we face is dealing with the misconceptions about domestic violence (in the community)," Askalani said. "WATCH has done a good job explaining the nuance of these cases."

Kappelhoff said that communicating the complexity of these cases and "highlighting the challenges of domestic violence cases" in our court system is important.

(Continued on Page 3)



Judge Mark Kappelhoff grew up in Anoka and spent a large part of his career working for the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department.

(Continued from Page 2)

“WATCH plays a valuable role in the courtroom,” he said. “They help assure that the proceedings are fair and equitable. They’re the eyes and ears of the community.”

The steering committee, Kappelhoff said, is a great space for sharing ideas and ensuring that the cases are handled fairly and effectively from the perspective of all the parties.

One example Kappelhoff cited is a working group that is focusing on probation outcomes. “We’re working with probation, public defenders, prosecutors and the court administrators,” he said. “We’re asking: Are there problems that they’re seeing? Are there people who are not in compliance? We’re seeking information from our justice partners and trying to determine whether there are policies or procedures that could be implemented to improve the outcomes of the cases. We encourage people to come forward with ideas. We empower that (through the steering committee process).”

Both judges agreed there are advantages to a coordinated and committed Domestic Violence Court. They said, on average, misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor cases are resolved rather quickly particularly from plea to sentencing. “I’ve never seen anything like it,” Askalani said, marveling at the efficiency of the process.

After a defendant enters a plea in a case, the probation department meets with the defendant, interviews the victim and does a background check. Probation officers then produce a report that is delivered to the judge, the prosecutor and defense attorneys that includes a sentencing recommendation.

“We get insight into what’s happening in this person’s life,” Kappelhoff said. “Are there substance abuse issues? Is there a history of domestic violence or was this an isolated incident? Does the victim wish to have contact with the defendant? ... With this information we are better able to make an informed decision about what is the best course of action to take in each individual’s case.”

They both said they’re honored to be working in a system that is trying to “get it right” on domestic violence.

“It’s an honor and a privilege to be a co-chair of the Domestic Violence Steering Committee,” Kappelhoff said. “We’re trying to take concrete steps (toward addressing) the problem of domestic violence in our society.”

“We learn from the group (the Domestic Violence Steering Committee) regarding what’s working well and how we can improve the justice system. Their voices are heard because we’re all at the table together.”

— Judge Mark Kappelhoff, co-chair of the Steering Committee

# Sex trafficking update

## Tracking cases from 2017

When WATCH published its first report on sex trafficking in December of 2016 there were still 11 unresolved cases. Now, a year later, we have outlined the results of those cases from both Hennepin and Ramsey County.

Of the 11 cases noted in 2016 only one has yet to be resolved. **Dornubari Levi Crawford** has had a warrant out for his arrest since August of 2017. The remaining 10 defendants who faced charges related to sex trafficking and prostitution resolved their cases within the last year.

**Kenneth Bruce Jackson** pleaded guilty to one count Felony Criminal Sexual Conduct in the third degree. A second charge of Engages in Sex Trafficking of Individual- Under 18 years old was dismissed in January of 2018. He received 48 months in prison with credit for 52 days and received 10 year's probation upon release.

**Wayde Joseph King** was convicted of one count Felony Promotes Prostitution of an Individual in November 2016. King received 90 months in prison, stayed for five years. This sentence was deemed a dispositional departure from the sentencing guidelines. King was also ordered to serve 51 days in the Hennepin County Workhouse, with credit for 51 days, and must serve five years of supervised probation.

**Yolanda Angelisha Lawson** pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Aid/Abet Promotes Prostitution-Under 18 Years Old in July 2017. A second charge of Aid/Abet Solicit-Under 18 years Old to Practice Prostitution was dismissed. Lawson received a Stay of Imposition Pursuant to M.S. 609.135 and was sentenced to serve 180 days in the Hennepin County Workhouse with credit for 36 days. She was also ordered to complete three years of supervised probation.

**Terri Ann Milstein** pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Promotes Prostitution of an Individual; a second charge was dismissed. Milstein received 48 months in prison, stayed for five years. This sentence was deemed a dispositional departure from the sentencing guidelines. Aside from the possibility of prison, Milstein was ordered to serve 365 days in the Hennepin County Workhouse, pay a fine of \$40,000 and complete 200 hours of community service within two years. She also received five years of supervised probation.

(Continued on Page 5)



### New sex trafficking reporting coming

We'll be releasing our second sex trafficking report in early March. The report will focus on who the buyers of sex are in Hennepin and Ramsey County, what charges are brought against them, how the cases are resolved, and what the sentences are. WATCH plans to use the recommendations in this report to advocate for lasting change within our court system for victims of sex trafficking.

**WATCH strongly believes that addressing the demand side of trafficking is critical to ending the sale of Minnesota women and girls.**

(Continued from Page 4)

**Laqueshia Danekia-Kay'D Moran** took her case to trial in February 2017 and it resulted in a mistrial and the prosecutor then dismissed the case.

**Jamal Jacob Moore**, perhaps one of the longest cases to resolve in our data, pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Attempt to Commit-Promote Prostitution in December 2016. Moore received 90 months in prison with credit for 157 days. This time was to be served concurrently with another case related to domestic assault.

**Alexandria Laneill Rodgers'** case was dismissed by Prosecuting Attorney Pursuant to Rule 30.01 in November 2017. She was facing one charge of Felony Engages in the Sex Trafficking of an Individual.

**Courtney Emmanuel Rodgers** pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Aid/Abet Promotes Prostitution-Under 18 years Old in June 2017. Rodgers received 90 months in prison, stayed for three years. This sentence was deemed a dispositional departure. Faced with the possibility of prison time, Rogers also received 180 days in the Hennepin County Workhouse, with credit for 36 days, and supervised probation for three years.

**Darryl Taylor** took his case to a court trial and was convicted of three charges, one count of Felony Promotes Prostitution of an Individual and two counts of Felony Aid/Abet Engages in the Sex Trafficking on an Individual. Taylor was not adjudicated on the Felony Conspiracy to Commit Engages in the Sex Trafficking of an Individual. Taylor received three separate sentences to be served consecutively for a total of 336 months (28 years) in prison.

**James Wayne Williams** pleaded guilty to one count of Aid/Abet Felony Promotes Prostitution- Under 18 years Old. Williams received 90 months in prison, stayed for five years, and 365 days in the Hennepin County Workhouse, with credit for 207 days. Once he is released from the workhouse, Williams will be on supervised probation for five years.

## In the news

### Senators collaborate to fight trafficking

U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Thune (R-SD) announced in early January that the bipartisan "Combating Human Trafficking in Commercial Vehicles Act," introduced to combat human trafficking in the transportation sector, has been signed into law by President Trump.

"Commercial drivers and truckers are often the first line of defense against human trafficking, yet they don't always have the tools necessary to help

(Continued on Page 6)



### Volunteers and interns needed

WATCH is a court monitoring and research organization based in Hennepin County. It is focused on improving the justice system's response to crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and neglect and human trafficking so victimized women and children can rebuild their lives. Its secondary aim is to create a more informed public.

**Position description:** Volunteers visit courtrooms in Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Ramsey County (St. Paul) and Washington County (Stillwater) to observe and take notes on cases pertaining to violence against women and children. Volunteers fill out WATCH forms that are provided, and turn them into the WATCH office after each shift.

WATCH volunteer shifts are Monday through Friday, either 8:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m., or 12:45-4 p.m.

Online training sessions are required. Applicants must fill out a volunteer application, interview with the Program Manager and pass a background check.

**How to apply:** Please contact the Program Manager Ellen Sackrison at [watchvolunteer@watchmn.org](mailto:watchvolunteer@watchmn.org).

There is a link to our application in the volunteer section on our website <http://www.watchmn.org/>. Please complete the form and e-mail it to the above e-mail or send via mail.

(Continued from Page 5)

prevent these crimes,” Klobuchar said. “This law will bring us one step closer to equipping and empowering our drivers to help prevent these heinous crimes we’re seeing too often in Minnesota and around the country.”

The new law designates there will be a human trafficking prevention coordinator at the U.S. Department of Transportation and it would increase outreach and education efforts at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. The bill is supported by Truckers Against Trafficking, National District Attorneys Association, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association.

More on that announcement can be found [here](#).

## Stearns County wins anti-trafficking grant

The Star Tribune reported in late December that Stearns County received a \$313,000, two-year state grant to intensify its human trafficking investigations this year. The grant will allow the county to convert a sex-trafficking task force into a full-time investigative unit.

The article quoted Police Chief Dave Bentrud of Waite Park, a small town outside of St. Cloud, saying that human trafficking is not just a big-city problem. “It’s a big problem here in central Minnesota,” he said.

St. Cloud Police Chief William Blair said, “No community is immune to this. It’s happening everywhere.” The Department of Public Safety grant will fund the Central Minnesota Sex Trafficking Investigative Task Force, which is made up of two Waite Park and St. Cloud police investigators, a part-time Stearns County Sheriff’s Office detective and a new crime analyst in the County Attorney’s Office.

The St. Cloud metro area has been an easy target for traffickers, County Attorney Janelle Kendall said. As a result, agencies have ramped up the focus on commercial sex the past few years, arresting more than 200 sex buyers in St. Cloud and Waite Park. Since 2015, eight of 13 pimps charged with sex trafficking have been convicted.

The task force is modeled after one in [Washington County](#), and will target sex traffickers and buyers while supporting adult and child sex workers. Task force members will also meet with schools to teach counselors, teachers and bus drivers how to identify victims and help them.

For more on the story, go [here](#).

### How can you help the justice system become more responsive to crimes of violence against women and children?

- You can share the **WATCH** mission and vision with your family and friends!
- You can boldly address issues of domestic violence prevention with those closest to you!
- You can volunteer to be a **WATCH** court monitor! Click [here](#) for the link to apply!
- You can graciously offer a financial donation to help support our work on behalf of the entire community!

Contact Nick Cichowicz to learn more:  
[nick@watchmn.org](mailto:nick@watchmn.org)